

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
200 Chestnut Street ● Third Floor ● Philadelphia, PA 19106 ● david_a_lange@nps.gov

**MEDIA ADVISORY
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**
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CONTACT: David Lange
Project Manager
(215) 597-6477

ANNOUNCEMENT

**National Park Service announces draft management alternatives for
New River Wild and Scenic River Study**

The National Park Service announced today that six draft alternatives have been identified for future management of a section of the New River currently under study for possible inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System. Information on river study and the draft management alternatives will be presented at public events on July 12th in Hinton, West Virginia, and July 13th, 2004 in Rich Creek, Virginia. These upcoming public events will provide area residents an opportunity to learn more about the six potential scenarios for future management and the possible implications of designating the river into the national system. Meeting attendees will also be able to share ideas about river issues and opportunities, and express opinions about how the river and lands along the river should be managed in the future. Information is also available online at: <http://www.nps.gov/phso/uppernew>

The Upper New River Wild and Scenic River Study was authorized by Congress to determine whether a 20-mile section of the New River straddling the Virginia/West Virginia border should be added to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. The study is looking at the New River from the Route 460 Bridge in Glen Lyn, Virginia, downstream to Bluestone Lake, near Hinton, West Virginia, and the surrounding area. In West Virginia, lands in the study area are currently administered by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (as part of the project area for the Bluestone Dam) and are managed by the State's Division of Natural Resources as part of the Bluestone Wildlife Management Area. The National Park Service's Northeast Regional Office in Philadelphia was assigned responsibility by Congress to conduct the study, and is working in close consultation with the Army Corps, the two states, adjacent communities and counties, users of the area, and other key stakeholders.

The study is considering a range of possible alternatives for how the area might be managed in the future. These include:

- **continuing current management,**
- **designating the river as a National Scenic River** administered by the National Park Service or the Army Corps of Engineers, or
- **designating the river as a National Scenic River and transferring ownership** of the river corridor to the states of Virginia and West Virginia.

- Recognizing that this section of the New River is part of a larger regional public resource that includes Bluestone Lake and lower portion of the Bluestone River, another approach would be to designate some or all of that broader area as a **National Recreation Area** (“NRA”). The NRA would be coordinated by either the National Park Service or the Army Corps of Engineers, and would include close working partnerships with the existing Bluestone and Pipestem state parks and the Bluestone National Scenic River, if they chose to participate. Under a National Recreation Area, the New River also would be designated as a National Scenic River.

All of these alternatives would retain the current emphasis on management of the area for fish and wildlife and traditional public uses such as hunting, fishing, camping, and boating.

Once agreement is reached on the range of alternatives, the study will shift toward evaluating their relative merits. The study will consider the effects of each alternative on the environment, public use, and the local economy. Also considered will be the degree of support for the different management alternatives among local communities, state and federal agencies, and interested organizations and individuals. In essence, the study will evaluate whether wild and scenic river designation makes sense for the area, or whether some other approach would be more appropriate -- including simply continuing current management.

The draft alternatives will be the focus of discussion at the upcoming public events in Hinton, West Virginia, and Rich Creek, Virginia. The *Memorial Building auditorium* in *Hinton*, located at corner of Park and James Streets, will be the site of a public open house and meeting on Monday, *July 12th, 2004*. From *4:00 to 5:00 pm and again from 6:00 – 7:00 pm*, the study team and agency participants will be available in an informal open-house setting to share information about the project. After the open house, a public meeting will be held from *7:00 to 8:30*. During the meeting, the study team will briefly summarize the study and explain the range of draft management alternatives. The remainder of the time will be devoted to discussion and answering questions. On Tuesday, *July 13, 2004*, the study team will be in *Rich Creek* at the *Rich Creek Community Center*, located at the corner of Spruce and North Streets, for an open house from *4:00 to 5:00 pm and again from 6:00 to 7:00 pm*, followed by a public meeting from *7:00 to 8:30 pm*.

At the conclusion of the study a report will be prepared for the U.S. Congress. A draft version of the study report is scheduled to be released for public review in fall 2004. Area residents will have opportunities to comment in person and in writing on the study report before it is approved and forwarded to the Congress. The Congress will make the final decision regarding whether or not the river should be designated and, if so, how it will be managed.